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HOME ECONOMICS EXTENSION OBJECTIVES

AS THEY RELATE TO THE TRAINING

OF EXTENSION WORKERS<sup>1</sup>

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director, State and assistant State leader in home demonstration work;  
land-grant college dean of home economics; agricultural college dean;  
agricultural college library, and experiment station library.



## HOME ECONOMICS EXTENSION OBJECTIVES

### AS THEY RELATE TO THE TRAINING

#### OF EXTENSION WORKERS

#### EXPRESSED OBJECTIVES OF EXTENSION

In discussing a training program for extension workers it is necessary to have clearly in mind the objectives of the work. I should like to review briefly the expressed objectives of home demonstration work.

The Smith-Lever Act in establishing cooperative agricultural extension work, emphasized the vocational training of farm people by stating that its purpose was "to aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics and to encourage the application of the same."

In discussing the Smith-Lever Act prior to its passage by the National Congress in 1914, Senator Vardaman, of Mississippi, presented the following interpretation:

"... The purpose of this bill is to help the tillers of the land to discover the hidden riches of the soil, to devise methods of cultivation that will lessen the burden of farm life by shortening the hours of drudgery, and render more productive the land. Its splendid purpose is to improve the man, enlarge his mental horizon, and give intelligent direction to his efforts. The effect also will be to add comforts to the country home, lighten the burdens of women, afford greater opportunities to the boys and girls upon whose shoulders soon must fall the responsibility of home and the burdens of government."

The extension objectives were set forth in a somewhat different way in 1923 by M. C. Burritt, then the vice director of extension of New York State, who thus outlined the function of the Extension Service:

"The fundamental purpose of any educational enterprise is to teach persons how to think, and not what to think. ... It is the function of the Extension Service to teach people to determine accurately their own problems, to help them to acquire knowledge and to inspire them to action, but it must be their own action out of their own knowledge and convictions."

Another interesting statement with the same point of view - the development of rural people themselves as a fundamental purpose of extension education has been made recently by H. C. Ramsower, director of Extension Service, College of Agriculture, Ohio State University:

"It is not what extension work does for people," he says, "but what it does to them that counts. ... The ultimate objective of extension

teaching is to promote the physical, mental, spiritual, and social growth of the individual farmer, his wife, and his children. According to our present point of view this can be done best by assisting them in analyzing their own problems, in finding solutions for them, and in bringing about the plans necessary to put these solutions into effect."

During the past year a committee of the Federal Extension Service staff was asked to restate the objectives of extension teaching in terms of recent developments and current thinking. The following is taken from a preliminary report of the committee:

"Inasmuch as extension education is concerned with people who are in definite life situations and actually engaged in practical farm and home pursuits, changing social and economic conditions profoundly affect the program and cause wide variations in the emphasis placed upon specific objectives.

"Expressed in broad educational terms, the fundamental aim or purpose of the extension work in agriculture and home economics, conducted cooperatively by the Federal Department of Agriculture and the State land-grant colleges, is to assist rural people to utilize more fully their resources in solving current problems and in meeting new situations. Through extension education rural men and women, boys and girls learn -

1. To identify and analyze problems.
2. To decide upon the best solutions.
3. To outline definite plans of action.
4. To put into effect the plans outlined.
5. To evaluate progress and accomplishments made in the solution of their problems."

Different States have expressed their objectives in various ways. Recently, the State staff of extension home economists in Missouri outlined some objectives to guide them in their work:

"The Extension Service in Missouri has as its basic purpose the advancement of rural life. The family objective or education for family life is the guiding principle in the development of the extension program.

"The aim of home economics education is to help farm families continuously develop more satisfactory living in their homes and communities through:

1. Increasing the incomes (money and nonmoney) and through better use of income and natural resources.
2. Helping the farm family maintain physical and mental health.
3. Living more harmoniously together within family and community.



4. Developing appreciation of beauty.
5. Formulating a wholesome philosophy of life.
6. Attaining desirable individual and social satisfactions."

These objectives are broadly stated. Each needs to be defined in terms indicating the kind of behavior being developed by rural families that may be recognized; the knowledges, attitudes, abilities in thinking, judgment, and skills involved.

In summarizing these statements, it may be said that cooperative extension work is concerned with the betterment of the economic and social status of rural men, women, boys, and girls through education. These objectives are the same as the objectives of all education and need to be recurrently stated in terms of changing situations. There is a land-grant college committee now studying home demonstration objectives and reporting at this session of the land-grant college meeting.

#### FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HOME ECONOMICS EXTENSION AND THE IMPLICATIONS FROM THE STANDPOINT OF A WELL-TRAINED PERSONNEL

##### Home Economics

From a survey of the objectives, there are four principal distinguishing characteristics that have a bearing on the training program.

First of all, by the terms of the Smith-Lever Act we work in a subject-matter field--"useful and practical information relating to agriculture and home economics."

Education for family life is the major concern of the program. The successful working out of the program suggests the need of such courses in technical home economics as foods and nutrition, clothing, housing, family relationships, child development, family economics, financial management, and allied subjects with applications made to homes and to family life based on family problems.

Health is one of the greater problems with which the extension worker has to deal. There are many agencies in each county that have health as their major program. The extension worker needs to be able, then, through cooperative effort, to work out with other agencies a program that meets home and community health needs; a health program that not only will help the young to build strong bodies, but help older people to maintain mental and physical health. All technical courses in home economics aid in the health program.

Since the Extension Service has as its basic purpose the advancement of rural life and the well-being and happiness of the rural family, recognition and emphasis need to be given to the structure of relationships

in the family and necessary consideration needs to be given to relieve tension in rural family living produced by modern situations.

With the demand on one side for many things which only cash will buy, and with small net incomes on the other side, it would seem that emphasis needs also to be placed on greater net income and wiser use of income and natural resources. There are many things that go to make up a higher level of living other than income. We recognize this. But programs analyzed in the light of net income are helpful to farm people.

The extension program, therefore, involves a knowledge of financial management. There is need to visualize the farm and home as a unit, working under an inclusive program, the family living on one side, the farm business on the other, to realize that if we do not invest in farm family business we do not have as much for farm family living and that the total amount of money and nonmoney income and other resources from the farm are directly related to the total spending and saving plan.

The program, therefore, makes it necessary for the extension worker to have such economic information, not only family economics but agricultural economics, or both, that will enable her to assist rural families in their financial planning; to help them to make decisions and adjustments; to help them in both the production and buying programs.

To be able to assist families in this major problem of making a living, production programs involving gardens, poultry, fruit, dairy products, and handicraft are helpful.

An example of the need of economic information necessary to assist families in making decisions regarding a purchase came up recently. A group of people gathered together in a community to decide whether or not to take advantage of the rural electrification program. The home demonstration agent discussed with them economic and social information to help them to arrive at a better basis upon which to make their decisions. She assisted each of them in working out a net worth statement and in drawing up a spending plan to enable them to consider the purchase in relation to a long-time plan and to total farm family living. This discussion led into net incomes from farms in the community, the use of credit, adjustments that could be made in farm homes to meet conditions, family cooperation, and a discussion of agencies in the county that were working on these problems.

This simple example shows how necessary it is for the extension agent to have at her command economic and social information bearing on the situation. She must know where to go to get technical help in the county and to know how best to work with other agencies that are assisting farm people on the same problems.



### Education

In the second place, as Vardaman, Burritt, and Ramsower have pointed out, we are concerned with the education of rural people, both adults and youth. And as they emphasize, education consists in growth of the individual. Subject matter is a means to this end, and has value only as it adds to this growth.

The home economics worker, then, should have a thorough background in the principles of education; philosophy of education; in educational methods, including those of adult education; in curriculum construction or program planning; and in evaluation or educational measurements and analysis and interpretation of facts.

### Rural People

A third distinguishing characteristic of extension is that we work with rural people. To deal with rural people and their problems, the home economics extension agent must be able to understand them. Courses in psychology should aid her in reaching this understanding. As she works with 4-H Club boys and girls, among her courses should be one in adolescent psychology.

It is essential that the extension worker be not only concerned with the farm family as a unit, but with the farm family as a part of the community. This necessitates a knowledge and understanding of rural social problems, and an understanding of the characteristics of a rural community, the importance to people of group approval, and the significance of social pressures exerted in a community. The group itself and its education from many sources, perhaps does more than any one educational agency to motivate individuals to change. Formal courses in sociology and rural sociology are essential to a well-trained personnel.

### Life Situations

In the fourth place, it was pointed out by the committee which met recently to restate the objectives of extension teaching, that the general direction of extension work has always been toward the better adjustment of rural people to life situations and changing economic and social conditions.

"Extension education, therefore, is concerned with people who are in definite life situations and actually engaged in practical farm and home pursuits." Changing social and economic conditions affect the program and cause variation in emphasis.

Since the working out of the program requires an intimate knowledge of problems which farm families on different economic levels are facing, such facts as these must be consistently held in mind:

Of the farm families in the United States, 57.2 percent own their farms, 31.6 percent are tenants, and 10.5 percent are sharecroppers. Forty percent of the full-owner farms are mortgaged./2

The income of the farm population of the United States is low according to estimates furnished by the National Resources Committee on Consumer Incomes; which shows that 18 percent had less than \$500, 35 percent had \$500-\$999, 34 percent had \$1,000-\$1,999, and 13 percent had \$2,000 and above./3

There is not much money available for necessities among farm families. Clothing expenditures of farm families averaged less than \$125 a family in the areas included in the consumer purchases study; yet clothing ranked among the "big four" of living expenses, along with food, household operation, and the family use of the automobile.

Farm housing conditions are still poor and housing facilities inadequate. Poor health in rural communities may be attributed in part to bad housing. For instance, in regard to running water in farm dwellings, the situation varies greatly from State to State. According to the study of consumer purchases, among families of native white farm operators in the \$1,000 to \$1,249 income class, the proportion of homes with hot and cold water in kitchen and bath ranged from 5 percent or fewer in the Southeast to 75 percent in California. The lack of sanitary facilities on farms is most marked in the South./3

On January 1, 1938, only 18 percent of all farms had electricity as compared with an average of about 13 percent in 1930. This varies from 2 percent in Mississippi to 95 percent in Rhode Island./3

### Summary

We may say, then, that the fundamental characteristics of home-economics extension are, first, that we work in a subject-matter field; second, that we are concerned with the education of adults and youth; third, that we are concerned with the development of rural people; and fourth, that we are concerned with people in life situations.

These fundamental characteristics imply that from the standpoint of a well-trained personnel, courses in technical home economics, including such courses as foods and nutrition, clothing, housing, family

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/2 U. S. Census, 1935.

/3 Consumer purchases study. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor, and Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Estimates of the distribution of nonrelief farm families (operators and laborers living on farms) by net family income for the year 1935-36. In this report net family income is defined as total net income from farming (including an imputed value of occupancy of the farmhouse and of goods furnished the family by the farm) and money income from nonfarm sources.

relationships, child development, family economics, financial management and allied subjects, courses in the field of economics and such agricultural courses that help in a production and consumption program are desirable.

Courses in the field of education, including principles of education and educational methods, philosophy of education, and psychology and courses in sociology, including rural sociology, are also desirable to a well-trained personnel.

The objectives are so broad and the job is so complex in its nature that there is need not only of the central core of technical information, but also for additional information. The acquisition of this may require another year of training after the extension worker is in the field, has become more mature, and feels the need of such information. The subjects in the curriculum, however, are of little use if we do not know how, and if we do not have the ability to make practical application of the subject matter in the home and community.

#### EXTENSION EDUCATION ITSELF IS A SUBJECT OF STUDY

Like the school, the home economics extension service has an educational program. But its program differs from the school's in that it does not give a formal program of studies to which a body of pupils of the same age group gives compulsory attendance. Extension work is, first of all, a voluntary educational endeavor and those who come for instruction do so, not because of coercion, but because of fundamental needs and interests. Relatively few meetings are provided for formal instruction. The number participating in home economics extension is large. The formal education of participating homemakers ranges from 3 years to 16 years, the average being 8 years. The ages of participating homemakers range from 18 years to 60, the average age being 44 years.

#### Extension Organization and Program Planning

It is essential, therefore, that the education and training of the home economics extension workers enable them to do their part in carrying out programs for large numbers. This requirement points to the need of understanding fundamental principles that govern effective organization of extension work, and to the need of developing a functioning local leadership as well as a need for understanding effective methods of teaching for different educational levels and different age levels.

#### Extension Methods

The extension worker needs to have an adequate knowledge of the means and agencies used in extension, such as the discussion technique, method demonstration, result demonstration, farm-home visit, circular letters, news stories, and exhibits and the use of them to help that part of the lower-income group which is not now being reached.



### Evaluation

It is also essential that the extension worker be able to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching methods in order to improve both materials and the method of instruction.

Much attention has been given to the formulation of objectives for a program of extension education. But specific evidences of the degree of progress that participants in the program have made in the direction of these objectives have not been given as much consideration. There has been a tendency to assume that goals are being attained. Where attention has been given to evaluation it has tended to be in terms of information learned and skills as indicated by tangible products. There is a growing recognition of the need for more critical thinking about what is actually accomplished and the use of a variety of evaluation techniques. Information and practices accomplished are still given importance, but the development of attitudes, appreciations, ability in thinking, judgment, and self-reliance are recognized as equally valuable.

### Business Administration

The proper prosecution of the program requires that the extension agent be a business woman. An untidy office with ill-arranged files, unanswered mail, poorly kept financial accounts, not only greatly handicaps the agent but lowers her greatly in the eyes of those whom she seeks to serve. It is essential that she know how to plan her own work, when to delegate authority, and how to conduct a well-organized office.

### Summary

It is desirable, therefore, for the extension worker to have training in extension organization, in extension program planning, in extension methods, in evaluation, and in business administration.

Many of the land-grant colleges are giving courses in extension methods. These courses are being taught by instructors who have had extension experience. Such courses may be of more help to an extension agent after she has had some experience in the county. This indicates the need of time for study while in service. It also points to the need of doing apprenticeship work with a well-trained county home demonstration agent.

## POINT OF VIEW OF HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENTS NOW IN SERVICE

A study on the preparation and training of extension workers, involving 7,873 extension workers has just been completed.<sup>/4</sup> There were (omitting Negro extension workers) 1,657 home demonstration agents, 86 assistant home demonstration agents, 261 home economics specialists, and 131 home demonstration supervisors included in the study. For our purpose in this paper, I shall give data relating principally to home demonstration agents.

### Tenure of Office

Sixty-two percent of the home demonstration agents reported that they had been in extension work 4 years or less. This indicates the large number of new workers in the service.

### College Training and Degrees

Forty-three percent of the home demonstration agents reported that they had taken advanced work as compared with 83 percent of the home economics specialists and 56 percent of the home demonstration supervisors.

Ten percent of the home demonstration agents held no degrees, 83 percent had bachelor's degrees, and 7 percent had master's degrees.

Six percent of the home economics specialists held no degrees, 46 percent had bachelor's degrees, and 48 percent had master's degrees.

Twenty-one percent of the home demonstration supervisors held no degrees, 56 percent had bachelor's degrees, and 22 percent had master's degrees.

It is interesting to note that less than one half of the home demonstration agents took part or all of their undergraduate training at the land-grant college of the State in which they were employed.

The most significant fact brought out by the classification of colleges attended is that 59 percent of the home demonstration agents received part or all of their undergraduate college training at institutions other than land-grant colleges (or the four colleges included in the land-grant classification.) In advanced training, 49 percent of the home demonstration agents took at least some of their training in

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<sup>/4</sup> Wilson, M. C., and Crile, Lucinda. Preparation and training of extension workers. Study made for the joint Land-Grant College and Department Committee on Training for Government Service. (Ext. Serv. Circ. 295. 1938.)



colleges other than land-grant. It does not necessarily follow that the home demonstration agents who attended other than land-grant colleges received less training in home economics. It would seem, however, that such training was in an atmosphere less closely associated with problems of rural people.

#### Subjects Found Most Helpful

The subjects found most helpful in extension work as reported by the home demonstration agents were: Technical home economics; education, philosophy, psychology; English, journalism; sociology, rural sociology; and chemistry, the last being mentioned by 36 percent of the group. Biology was next in order, with 32 percent.

Sociology courses head the list of subjects on which home demonstration agents wish they had taken more work, closely followed by courses in technical home economics and education. Courses in business administration, English, and economics were also listed by more than one third of the home demonstration agents.

#### Advanced Study and Apprenticeship

Thirty-six percent of the home demonstration agents considered that training beyond a bachelor's degree was of much importance as compared with 64 percent of the home economics specialists and 52 percent of the home demonstration supervisors.

Ninety-three to ninety-six percent of all the home economics extension workers reporting considered that apprentice training should be provided for extension workers.

Twenty-nine percent of the home demonstration agents considered that the training should be provided before completing a bachelor's degree and they indicated that an average of 0.7 year should be provided for such training. Forty-seven percent considered that apprentice training should be provided after completing the bachelor's degree, and they indicated an average of 0.7 year was necessary for such training. An additional 16 percent considered apprentice training should be provided both before and after the bachelor's degree with an average of 1.4 years for such training.

Eleven percent of the home demonstration supervisors thought that the apprentice training should be provided before completing the bachelor's degree only. Fifty-three percent considered that the training should be provided after completing the bachelor's degree, and an additional 30 percent considered that the training should be provided both before and after completing the bachelor's degree with an average of 1.4 years provided for such training.

Extension Courses in Organization and Methods

Seventeen percent of the home demonstration agents had taken college courses in extension organization or methods. Ninety-six percent of them thought that such courses should be provided and 50 percent preferred the courses to be provided on the undergraduate level only, whereas 19 percent preferred the courses to be provided on the graduate level only, and 26 percent preferred the courses to be provided on both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The home demonstration supervisors differed somewhat from these opinions. Twenty-one percent of the home demonstration supervisors had taken college courses in extension organization or methods. Thirty-three percent of them preferred courses to be provided on the undergraduate level only, 16 percent on the graduate level only, and 49 percent on both undergraduate and graduate levels.

These results giving the point of view of the extension workers now in the service do not differ from but, rather, supplement the information and bear out facts in relation to training as summarized by your committee in 1936.

At the land-grant college meeting in 1936, Genevieve Fisher, dean of home economics, Iowa State College, gave a report of the results of a survey made by the committee on instruction to evaluate the preparation received in land-grant colleges for the work of the home demonstration agents. /5

"Suggestions for the improvement of college courses were many, varying by States. In all four regions, however, the request for a course in extension methods with some plan for field participation, out-ranked all other suggestions. In all four regions, also, were most frequently suggested a more practical application of the technical courses in home economics to rural home needs. ...

"The need for training in general office procedure such as typing, filing, and report making ranked high in all regions. Following as close second were suggestions for required courses in demonstration methods, rural problems, and recreational leadership."

Mildred Horton, vice director and State home demonstration agent, Texas Extension Service, gave a report of the results on the type of

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/5 The data were obtained through a questionnaire sent to those extension workers who were graduates either of land-grant colleges and universities or of institutions offering similar training in those Southern States where the land-grant colleges are not coeducational. Four hundred eighty-two replies were received from 39 States and 2 Territories.

training State home demonstration agents deem desirable for home demonstration agents.<sup>/6</sup> Under the heading "Shortages" in training, the State leaders reported that home demonstration agents need training in the productive phases of homemaking and in sociology, journalism, child development, parent education, and economics. Twenty-two States believed attention should be given to extension methods, and 13 States wanted training in office organization. Suggestions made in the report include:

"More professional or methods courses should be added to the requirements for the bachelor of science degree for home demonstration agents rather than technical or subject-matter courses. Rural leadership, office organization, parliamentary law, adult education (with special reference to rural people), organization principles and relationships, and the problem method as applied to extension teaching are courses most needed.

"In technical or subject-matter courses those most needed seem to be in current economic problems related to rural problems. Many subject-matter courses offered are not required and, while very desirable, can not be taken advantage of when few electives are allowed.

"Serving as assistant county home demonstration agent and practical experience in all phases of homemaking were recommended for an effective training program. Training schools for prospective agents, lasting from 2 or 3 days to several weeks, were suggested along with regular group meetings of new agents for the discussion of methods and subject matter. Closer contact with other organizations working with rural people and with research workers was also recommended."

#### IN-TRAINING SERVICE

The short-time specialized summer-school courses designed to meet the current professional improvement needs of all extension workers are a significant development in professional improvement in recent years. These schools were held in 11 States during the summer of 1938. The courses were from 3 to 8 weeks' duration and were open to both men and women. These courses included the techniques of extension teaching as a profession, as well as agents' requirements for additional subject-matter training. These schools were attended by approximately 500 experienced extension workers from 38 to 40 States. The States having schools were Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, New York, Oregon, Tennessee, and Virginia, as well as Tuskegee Institute and Prairie View College.

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<sup>/6</sup> Questionnaire concerning the need for a training program for home demonstration agents was sent in June 1936 to the State home demonstration agents of 48 States, Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. Thirty-four had answered by October 1936.



These courses may lead to an advanced degree. Regional centers have proved successful as workers appreciate the opportunity for exchanging ideas with workers from other States.

Extension workers in increasing numbers are taking graduate courses in the various institutions. A year ago there were 23 extension workers enrolled at Columbia University.

The home demonstration agents suggested specific courses which they considered should be included in the curricula of the 3 to 6 weeks' special summer schools for extension workers that are being set up at some of the colleges.<sup>/7</sup>

Ninety-two percent of the home demonstration agents listed subjects for such courses. Courses dealing with technical home economics head the list suggested by the county home demonstration agents, followed closely by extension and sociology. Other subjects listed by more than 25 percent of the home demonstration agents are English, technical agriculture, economics, education, and business administration. It is interesting to note in this connection that courses in technical agriculture were listed as being desired by the home demonstration agents. Courses in technical home economics did not win corresponding support from the agricultural agent group.

The courses suggested by extension workers for inclusion in the curricula of special summer extension schools undoubtedly reflect better than any other criteria the need for additional training that is most closely associated with the actual conduct of extension teaching. These suggestions, although of greatest value in setting up in-service training courses, should also receive the attention of those responsible for outlining college-training programs for prospective extension workers.

In a summary we may say that one of the most significant points brought out by the study is the relatively high percentage of county home demonstration agents who received part or all of their college training at other than land-grant institutions.

All home economics extension workers included in the study as well as other extension groups are practically unanimous in the belief that prospective extension agents should be provided college courses in extension organization and methods, and should serve an apprenticeship of 1 year or more before being given a permanent extension appointment.

More than 30 percent of the county extension staff consider advanced study of much importance, and more than 85 percent consider such study important to the successful conduct of extension teaching in the county.

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<sup>/7</sup> See footnote 4.

That practical experience in farming or homemaking contributes to the ability to do successful extension work is the opinion of the vast majority of county extension agents, who reported such experience. They ranked teaching experience as a close second. Business, research, and other types of experience in professional agriculture and home economics were also reported as beneficial by a substantial proportion of agents.

Courses suggested for the curricula of special 3 to 6 weeks' extension summer schools are perhaps the best index of the additional training which would be most helpful to county extension agents in the practical conduct of their work.

The combined judgment of the members of the extension staff included in this study not only indicates the helpfulness of the subjects taken in college training, but also the desirability of curricular and other adjustments needed to provide a better-trained personnel, and also points out the nature of the improvements that should be made.

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Home Economics Extension Objectives  
as They Relate to the Training  
of Extension Workers

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